

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: COUNTY FACILITIES - PUBLIC HEARING

DATE: MARCH 17, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: OTHERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS	O'CONNOR	WILLIAM LAMY, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
	CHAMPAGNE	PUBLIC WORKS
	VANNESS	JEFFREY TENNYSON, DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF THE
	GIRARD	DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

FRED AUSTIN, BUILDING PROJECT COORDINATOR

FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL
SERVICES

SUPERVISORS THOMAS
GOODSPEED
PITKIN

JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD

KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER

SUPERVISORS BELDEN

KENNY

MERLINO

SIMMES

SOKOL

STRAINER

TAYLOR

TESSIER

AMY BARTLETT, FIRST ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY

KAREN PUTNEY, ADMINISTRATOR OF FIRE PREVENTION &
BUILDING CODE ENFORCEMENT

ROBERT BLAIS, MAYOR OF THE VILLAGE OF LAKE GEORGE

SUSAN BOYER, THE CHAZEN COMPANIES

CHRIS ROUND, THE CHAZEN COMPANIES

BARBARA BEAL, THE CHAZEN COMPANIES

JON NORRIS, CLARK PATTERSON LEE

WALT LENDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE LAKE GEORGE
ASSOCIATION

ALYSON MARTIN, *THE POST STAR*

DAVID CEDERSTROM, *THE CHRONICLE*

THOM RANDALL, *THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*

TONY HALL, *THE LAKE GEORGE MIRROR*

CHARLENE DiRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED SIGN-IN SHEETS FOR ALL OTHERS PRESENT

Chairman Monroe called the meeting of the County Facilities Committee to order at 7:00 p.m. He announced that this was a Public Hearing to discuss the Gaslight Village Property with the residents of Warren County.

Chairman Monroe noted that the majority of the Warren County Board of Supervisors were present, as well as Robert Blais, Mayor of the Village of Lake George. He said that the Gaslight Village Property had been the subject of many discussions between the 3 municipalities (3M's: Warren County, the Town of Lake George and the Village of Lake George) and the 3 environmental groups (3E's: the Lake George Association, The Fund for Lake George and the Lake George Land Conservancy). He noted that the Property had been purchased by the 3M's and the 3E's on March 14, 2008 and was viewed by the Warren County Board of Supervisors as both an environmental project and an economic development project. He advised that the primary focus of this meeting would be the festival space, which consisted of 2.5 acres on the Property, and what would be done with the existing buildings on the festival space.

Chairman Monroe explained that the 3E's had applied for grant funding through the Environmental Protection Fund for the demolition of the buildings and David Decker, of the Lake George Watershed Conference, had confirmed that \$1.2 million had been approved. He stated that the Warren County Board of Supervisors had passed a resolution which would keep the options open regarding the future of the existing buildings on the Property. He reported that the Lake George Association (LGA) had offered to fund a study of the possible uses of the Property and added that The Chazen Companies had been retained to develop conceptual plans for the festival space. He noted that the Warren County Board of Supervisors requested Clark Patterson Lee to complete an architectural and structural study of the Opera House and Cavalcade of Cars buildings.

Chairman Monroe advised that Susan Boyer, of The Chazen Companies, would give a Power Point Presentation on the concepts that had been developed and added that they would take questions and comments following the presentation. *A copy of the Power Point Presentation is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Boyer commenced the Power Point Presentation by outlining the overview of the West Brook Conservation Initiative and the process of needs assessment which had been undertaken. She said that the 3M's and the 3E's were partners in the Initiative and added that there were other parties who were volunteers or who were otherwise associated with the project. She displayed a map and located the the festival space, the area of focus for the meeting.

Ms. Boyer stated that West Brook was the largest single source of pollution and sediment to Lake George and that thousands of tons of sediment had been deposited in Lake George from West Brook. She said that the goal of the Initiative was to capture 90% of the sediment flowing into Lake George and to remove 50% of the pollutants in the stormwater from Route 9. She stated that the plan was to transform the former Gaslight Village Property into an environmental park featuring settling ponds, restored wetlands, boardwalks, a pavilion, some form of environmental education and festival grounds.

Ms. Boyer presented slides which highlighted the aspects of the Initiative, as follows: constructed wetlands; the sediment settling basin; the infiltration and rain gardens; the circulation and connections; the environmental education; and the festival grounds. She reiterated that the festival space was the topic under discussion for the meeting.

Chris Round, of The Chazen Companies, said that the Supervisors had requested options for potential use of the festival space and had requested that The Chazen Companies design three separate concepts, which had been developed based on the needs, that were identified during the interview process. He apprised that 2.5 acres of the Property was designated as festival space for use by the 3M's. He stated that The Chazen Companies had conducted interviews with representatives from the 3M's, event organizers and tourism specialists in order to determine the desires and necessities for the festival space. Mr. Round added that on March 10, 2009 representatives from the 3M's and some event organizers had reviewed the three concepts and had provided feedback. He reviewed the planning principals, which had been followed in the development of the three concepts and said that all three concepts achieved the planning principals which he highlighted, as follows:

- ▶ to provide maximum flexibility of use;
- ▶ to balance the needs of the municipalities and the users;
- ▶ to compliment the surrounding park-like setting;
- ▶ to create pedestrian connections to key locations;
- ▶ to include the festival grounds as part of the conservation park for stormwater treatment;
- ▶ to not increase the amount of stormwater runoff from the festival grounds; and
- ▶ to use native foliage that would be non-invasive to the existing habitat.

Ms. Boyer advised that The Chazen Companies had developed the concepts, each of which contained the same basic amenities and were divided into three zones. She explained the three concepts, as follows:

- Concept One would be an open space with all of the existing buildings removed and would have a total of 217 parking spaces.
 - Zone One: reinforced turf grass in a park-like setting with 75 auxiliary parking spaces and would be the ideal location for tents or a temporary stage.
 - Zone Two: a porous solid surface with 90 parking spaces, ideal for functions that require a hard surface such as motorcycle demos.
 - Zone Three: reinforced turf grass with in-ground markers and paver borders to designate individual vendor spaces. This zone would include 52 auxiliary parking spaces.
- Concept Two would have the Cavalcade of Cars building renovated as an open air pavilion and all other buildings removed and would have a total of 171 parking spaces.
 - Zone One: reinforced turf grass in a park-like setting with 88 auxiliary parking spaces and a temporary stage with a lawn.

- Zone Two: a porous solid surface with 83 parking spaces, ideal for functions such as motorcycle demonstrations.
- Zone Three: Cavalcade of Cars building renovated as an open air pavilion for use as a temporary skate board park or ice rink, or for events such as farmers markets and craft fairs.
- Concept Three would have the Cavalcade of Cars renovated as a closed structure and the Opera House renovated as an open air pavilion and would have a total of 125 parking spaces.
 - Zone One: A porous solid surface with 125 parking spaces which could be used for such events as motorcycle demonstrations. If both buildings were kept Zone One would be the only available place for parking.
 - Zone Two: Opera House renovated as an open air pavilion.
 - Zone Three: Cavalcade of Cars renovated as a closed structure for events that require air conditioning.

Ms. Boyer noted that Zone One of each concept would include a pedestrian walkway that would connect to a stairway leading to the Fort William Henry and the Conference Center, which would be an added convenience for the organizations. She said that Zone Two of each concept was the best location for the access road and Zone Three of each concept would contain a pedestrian walkway to Beach Road.

Pertaining to Concept Two, Jon Norris, of Clark Patterson Lee (CPL), stated that CPL had completed an architectural, structural, mechanical and electrical study of the Cavalcade of Cars and Opera House buildings. He added that they had also completed a building code review. He explained that the Cavalcade of Cars building had a steel facade with an addition which was a wood frame construction. He recommended that the sprinklers be maintained. He said that some of the improvements would be made for handicapped accessibility. He noted that the foundation of the building was in good shape and suggested that the metal portion of the roof be replaced. He advised that the study had been completed with the assumption that it would be a municipal bid, meaning that prevailing wage rates would be required, as well as bonding and insurance costs. He said that if Town, Village or County Labor was not utilized, contractor overhead and profit would increase the cost of construction.

In reference to Concept Three, Mr. Norris suggested that if the Opera House was to be used as an open air pavilion, it would be best to remove the sides of the building which faced Route 9 and the Cavalcade of Cars building. He advised that the scope of work would include maintaining and renovating the existing facade. He said that electrical and sprinkler work would need to be completed. He stated that the Cavalcade of Cars building could have a heating and air conditioning system installed.

Mr. Round asked the members of the public if they had any questions concerning the three conceptual designs. He said that following the questions, there would be a public comment portion and asked that anyone who wished to comment, state their name, which concept they preferred and why.

In response to the question, do any of the concepts reduce the effectiveness of stormwater treatment more than any other concept, Mr. Round responded that all three concepts would address and improve the treatment of stormwater as compared to the current condition. He added that Concept One which had the least amount of hard surfacing would have the least amount of stormwater runoff.

In answer to the question, would Concept Three be the least effective for stormwater treatment, Mr. Round replied that Concept Three had the most hard surfacing and therefore would have the greatest amount of stormwater runoff of the three concepts; however, he added, all three concepts had less hard surfacing than the existing conditions.

Mr. Round stated that the Constructed Wetlands would address a variety of stormwater issues and the festival space would be for the purpose of event usage. He added that all three concepts addressed stormwater that would result from the project that was proposed for the festival space. He reiterated that all three concepts would improve the effectiveness of stormwater treatment as compared to the existing conditions.

In response to the question, has a concept been developed to improve the surface retention of the impervious surface which had been highly compacted, Mr. Round responded that there had been a Phase One environmental site assessment, as well as test boring performed on the site.

In response to the question, what was the estimated cost of renovating the two buildings, Mr. Norris replied, as follows:

- ▶ the renovation of the Opera House as an open air pavilion would require removal of exterior walls, sprinkler work and electrical work which would have a construction cost of approximately \$720,000 and a total project cost of approximately \$900,000;
- ▶ the renovation of the Cavalcade of Cars building as an open air pavilion would require demolition, handicapped accessibility work, septic work, exterior wall work, repair work, sprinkler work, mechanical and electrical work which would have a construction cost of approximately \$500,000 and a total project cost of approximately \$630,000;
- ▶ the renovation of the Cavalcade of Cars building as an exhibition hall would require additional mechanical work and would have a construction cost of approximately \$530,000 and a total project cost of approximately \$672,000;
- ▶ all total project cost estimates included legal fees, bonding, insurances, construction, administration, testing, engineering, contractor overhead and profit; and
- ▶ cost per square foot was estimated, as follows:
 - Opera House as open air pavilion, \$65 per square foot;
 - Cavalcade of Cars as open air pavilion, \$37 per square foot; and
 - Cavalcade of Cars as an exhibition hall, \$39 per square foot.

Robert Blais, Mayor of the Village of Lake George, asked which of the three concepts was the recommendation of CPL and Mr. Norris responded that CPL had been retained to conduct an architectural and structural study and not to recommend one concept over another. He said that there were cost measures which needed to be undertaken and improvements to be made. He stated that CPL felt that the best concept would be to rehabilitate the buildings to an appearance which would be marketable to the community.

In answer to the question, were asbestos and lead paint studies completed and was the cost of abatement included in the cost analysis, Mr. Norris replied that the report was incomplete at this time and more information on lead paint and asbestos were needed.

In response to a question concerning the square footage of the buildings, Mr. Norris replied that the Opera House was approximately 11,000 square feet and the Cavalcade of Cars was approximately 13,500 square feet. Ms. Boyer added that the festival space was 2.5 acres.

In answer to the question, what would it cost to construct new buildings, Mr. Norris responded that new buildings could not be constructed at a cost as low as \$65 per square foot and added that the average new construction cost was \$180 per square foot.

Mr. VanNess asked if the Cavalcade of Cars building could be renovated as a pole barn. Mr. Norris stated that the building had a steel frame and the facade was studs with sheetrock. He added that the structure needed to be protected as far as maintenance and longevity. Mr. VanNess stated that the building was supported by steel poles and asked if the poles could be enclosed in a wood facade that would make it look presentable. Mr. Round responded affirmatively and added that it would not be as simple as it sounded.

In response to a question concerning the cost of demolition, Walt Lender, Executive Director of the LGA, responded that grant funding was available through the New York State Department of State for the cost of the demolition and the construction of the wetlands.

Mr. Round requested comments from the public on which concept they preferred and the reason for choosing such. Chairman Monroe pointed out that there were 15 Supervisors present, as well as Mayor Blais. He added that the decision of what was done with the festival space would be made by the Board of Supervisors and the Lake George Town Board and Village Board.

A Lake George businesswoman commented that she was in favor of Concept Three and added that enclosed buildings were necessary to increase tourism and events in the Village of Lake George during the winter months.

Frank McCoy, Lake George Town Councilman, stated that he was in favor of Concept Three. He said that the Village of Lake George and Warren County had passed resolutions

stating that they would not expend further funds on the buildings until a plan of action was determined. He advised that the rental income that would be generated by the buildings would help alleviate some of the cost of upkeep to the property, which he estimated at \$150,000 per year. He added that if the buildings were removed it was probable that organizations would require the Town of Lake George provide them with tents in order to hold their events.

Kathy Redpath, resident of the Town of Lake George, said that the residents of the Town of Lake George had requested to see the Town's plans for renovation of the buildings and they had not been provided. She advised that the Town of Lake George had held an Open House on the Gaslight Village Property on Sunday March 15, 2009. She added that the Village of Lake George and Warren County had not been notified of the Open House. She said that the 3M's were not working together on the project. She noted that if the buildings were merely made presentable as had been suggested by the Town, it would not attract tourists to the area.

George Green, resident of the Town of Lake George, stated that he preferred Concept Three. He said that tourism was the primary industry of the Town of Lake George. He apprised that as taxpayers, they owned the buildings and wanted to keep them. He said that it made sense to invest in the renovations to the buildings.

Burt Loveland, resident of the Town of Lake George, said that he was in favor of Concept One, as it represented the true nature of the West Brook Conservation Initiative. He noted that the buildings did not have architectural or historical significance and added that the Lake George Forum was vacant.

Caryl Clark, a longtime resident of both the Village and the Town of Lake George, advised that she preferred Concept Three. She noted that she was a former County Clerk and a former Lake George Town Clerk. She said that the tourism industry provided the primary economy in Warren County. She explained that more than 100 people had attended the Open House on Sunday and there had been many positive comments in favor of retaining the buildings and that many had requested that a petition be signed.

Janie Green, resident of the Town of Lake George, stated that she was in favor of Concept Three. She said that she had attended all of the public meetings that pertained to the Gaslight Village Property. She advised that she wanted to see both buildings kept and used for purposes such as a youth and community center, a convention center, for use during Americade and other large events and an amphitheater. She voiced her opinion that the property had been an eyesore for more than 16 years.

George McGowan, resident of the Town of Lake George, said that he preferred Concept One. He advised that improvements of the water quality of Lake George was a valid reason for the purchase of the Gaslight Village Property; however, he added, he did not feel that the renovation of the buildings should be undertaken by the 3M's.

Jim Gitto, resident of Warren County, stated that he had over twenty years experience in the construction business and he questioned the cost estimate of \$50,000 per building to make the buildings presentable and bring them up to code. He advised that the Cavalcade of Cars building was in much better shape than the Opera House. He said he was in favor of Concept Two.

John Carr, resident of the Town of Lake George and business owner in the Village of Lake George, said that he preferred Concept Three. He advised that there were seven vacant buildings on Canada Street and that the economy in Lake George was not as good as had been stated. He asserted that the buildings should be made event ready and that they should be made presentable without spending an exorbitant amount of money.

Deb Johnson, resident of the Town of Lake George, stated that she was in favor of Concept Three and that County labor or local contractors should be used for the construction as opposed to hiring an outside company.

A resident of the Town of Lake George remarked that she was in favor of Concept One. She said that since the County and the Village had passed resolutions stating that they would not contribute funds to the renovation of the buildings, the burden would fall on the Town taxpayers.

Helene Wittorn, resident of the Town of Lake George, commented that she was in favor of Concept One. She advised that whichever concept was followed would be an improvement to the property; however, she added, Concept One would make the use of the property more flexible and would have the lowest maintenance costs.

Karen Azer, resident of the Town of Lake George and member of the Lake George Citizens Group, said that Concept One was the best option; however, she added, if the buildings were retained, the work should be completed by professionals. She noted that the original plan for the festival space was to be grassy open fields with parking. She advised that an inexpensive renovation would not be an asset to the community and recommended the buildings be demolished using the available grant funding.

Joanne Gavin, resident of the Town of Lake George and member of the Lake George Citizens Group, agreed that Concept One was the best option. She stated that the 3E's had managed to work well together; however, she added, it was discouraging that while the County and the Village had filed the plans to complete the buildings and were holding this public meeting, the Town of Lake George continued to put up road blocks, such as holding an Open House without notifying the other property owners. She noted that the work that had been completed at the property thus far has been at the expense of the Town taxpayers.

John Strough, resident of Warren County, said that he preferred Concept One; however, he stated, he understood the economic needs of the 3M's. He advised that if the buildings

were renovated and enclosed it could be more of a hindrance than a benefit. He apprised that he felt Concept Two was preferable to Concept Three, as it only retained one of the buildings as an open air pavilion. He suggested that better visual renderings of what the completed buildings would look like would have been helpful for choosing one of the concepts.

Gary Moon, resident of the Town of Lake George, advised that he had been in favor of Concept Two or Three; however, he added, after attending this meeting he has decided that sufficient work had not been completed in assessing costs and determining the overall impact on the environmental project; therefore, he said, he was now in favor of Concept One.

Skip Stranahan, resident of Warren County, said that Concept Two was the best option, as one building would be retained to provide shelter from the elements. He recommended that at least one of the buildings needed to be kept and that the concepts needed more thought prior to proceeding. Chairman Monroe advised that the festival space was still in the conceptual phase. Mr. Stranahan voiced his opinion that at least one building needed to be available for the events as a public safety precaution.

Mayor Blais apprised that he had worked with many events, some of which he had helped to originate. He reported that regardless of which concept was chosen, the Village of Lake George was prepared to work with the other municipalities and the 3E's towards the original goals of the project. He read an excerpt from a letter submitted by William Dow, of the Lake George Steamboat Company; a copy of which is on file with the minutes. He reported that the landowners of both adjacent properties were opposed to retaining any buildings on the property. He said that he had spoken with Steve Russler, Chief Official of Grants for the Department of State, who had confirmed that the \$1.2 million Environmental Protection Fund grant, which would cover the cost of demolition, was in place. He stated that the Village of Lake George supported either Concept One or Two.

Alex Parrott, resident of the Town of Lake George, said he supported Concept One, which would require the least amount of maintenance. He advised that the existence of buildings would significantly increase the cost of maintaining the property.

Gene Merlino, Supervisor of the Town of Lake Luzerne, stated that he had originally been in favor of the County's participation in the purchasing of the Gaslight Village Property. He advised that the taxpayers of the Town of Lake Luzerne had helped to purchase the property with their County taxes. He advised that if the property was merely grassy open space it would not benefit the taxpayers from the other Towns in Warren County. He reported that the Town of Lake George had received \$2,072,000 in sales tax revenue in 2008, which was an increase of approximately \$50,000 as compared to 2007. He added that sales tax revenue for the Town of Lake George was mostly generated from tourists. He advised that the Town of Lake Luzerne had a net loss of \$33,000 in sales tax revenue for 2008. Of the options offered, Mr. Merlino stated that he was in favor of Concept Three;

however, he said, he would prefer that the County sell their interests in the property to the 3E's.

Robert Rockwell, resident of the Town of Lake George, stated that buildings on the property for event usage would be competing with Lake George hotels that had convention rooms. He advised that the Town of Lake George needed a teen center as a place for teens to gather.

Bob Stradon, resident of the Town of Lake George, said that he preferred Concept Two, as it would retain one building for use, as well as alleviate some of the parking issues.

Bill Robinson, resident of the Town of Lake George, stated that either Concept Two or Three would be acceptable. He advised that the buildings should be of simple construction and that the renovations should be completed for the least amount of expense using County, Town and Village labor and volunteer contractors like himself.

Luisa Craige-Sherman, Executive Director of the Lake George Chamber of Commerce, apprised that the purchase of the Gaslight Village Property had been with the dual purposes of the conservation of Lake George and the festival space. She stated that the tourism industry in Warren County generated \$34 million a year and was a key factor in employment. She said that for the last six months the Chamber had been unable to find facilities to accommodate the requests of event planners who were interested in holding their events in Lake George. She advised that although there were beautiful facilities in Lake George, there were none that could handle conventions of 1,000 plus attendees. She added that the economic impact of an 8-day convention with 1,000 attendees was approximately \$2.5 million. She said that if that same 8-day convention rented the Cavalcade of Cars building, it would generate \$12,000 in revenue. She advised that in Warren County, tourism revenue was generated by the occupancy tax. She reported that the Lake George Forum was for sale and would soon enter into the foreclosure process. She reported that the Lake George Chamber of Commerce had adopted a resolution in support of Concept Three.

Mark Martucci, President of the Warren County Council of Chambers, stated that they had also adopted a resolution in support of Concept Three.

Chairman Monroe said that the three concepts were on the Warren County website, www.co.warren.ny.us, and added that additional comments via email could be sent to the County via the website.

Mr. Lender said that the 3E's had been working on the designs for the stormwater aspects of the project for the last 12 months. He added that the initial goal was to protect the waters of Lake George and maintain an attractive park-like setting. He continued by saying that the project would remove sediment and pollutants from the West Brook Watershed. He advised that the engineering plans would need to be finalized and the 3E's

would undergo fund-raising efforts. He reiterated that the funding was in place for the demolition of the buildings.

Chairman Monroe reported that he had received nine emails from people who could not attend the meeting, all of which were in favor of Concept One; copies of the emails are on file with the minutes.

As there was no further business to come before the County Facilities Committee Chairman Monroe adjourned the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist